



EVERYDAY ART QUARTERLY



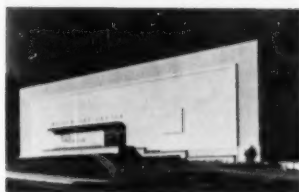
NUMBER 27, 1953

WALKER ART CENTER, MINNEAPOLIS

Designs on cover taken from earthenware plates by Edwin and Mary Scheier



LEZA S. McVEY: stoneware, red-black gunmetal glaze



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EVERYDAY ART QUARTERLY

Issue Number 27, 1953

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EDWIN AND MARY SCHEIER



Edwin Scheier studied art, sculpture and crafts, in New York art schools. Mary Scheier studied art in New York and Paris. Since 1940 they have both been at the University of New Hampshire where Edwin Scheier is Assistant Professor of Art and Mary is Artist in Residence.

They have won prizes in the 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, and 16th National Ceramic Exhibitions, and served on the jury of awards for the 15th National exhibition.

Their work is included in many permanent collections including the Metropolitan Museum, Museum of Modern Art, Detroit Institute of Art, Walker Art Center, Addison Gallery of American Art, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Royal Ontario Museum, and the International Museum of Ceramics, Faenza, Italy.

There is no material more satisfactory than clay; and no material can be more dangerous. A facile medium, immediately responsive, it allows more than most for trite and immediately pleasing effects. Mistakes can be hidden—too easily—under unrelated decoration. In other arts subject-matter may give strength and interest, at least for a time; in a basically abstract art like pottery, it cannot. Clay is no medium for the craftsman unsure of himself. Neither is it a vehicle for over-sophisticated expression. Most of the present day potters have lost the naivete of the old craftsmen who worked for their community as necessity arose and followed traditions upon which they did not need to philosophize.



Many are intellectuals working with ideas as much as with their material. Vitality cannot be acquired second hand, or by reading books. Clay requires of the artist-craftsman more than the ability to translate into something permanent the rational forms which he knows clay can assume; it demands a feeling for its primitive qualities based on a slow growth of understanding.

It also demands on the part of the potter humility and restraint. A craft in which technique plays such a vital part lends itself to virtuosity, bravura, preciosity—the three great enemies of even the best potters. What of course matters most in ceramics, in which fast, immediate developments of essentials is a primary quality, is not the use of a new red or the discovery of a new crystalline glaze, but the expression of a creative urge and a clear translation of a private sensation.

But no material can be more satisfactory than clay. Flexible, moldable, supremely plastic, it is responsive to the slightest pressure of the fingers, the slightest touch of the potter's hand. Elemental, it has the permanent quality of things found in the earth; the potter handling it often feels that it is an extension of himself that becomes alive.

To what Goethe called "the mood of the artist's mind at the time of creation," clay gives expression; it also translates into something concrete, definitive, the character of the craftsman, whether it is the placidity of the Sung potter or the often tragic sense of repression of the present day potter. Usually too abstract to repro-

duce a visual experience, clay sets down a mental impression, conveys the personal expression of an emotion which could not have been conveyed in any other way. The immediacy of the medium, its basically austere quality, are a warrant of the artist's sensitiveness and sincerity. Of all arts, except possibly drawing (but without the incompleteness of drawing), pottery alone has the spontaneity of the unconscious gesture, of the too quickly forgotten flash of the mind. For us today, so rarely satisfied with the carefully conceived, deceptively finished work of art, handling a piece of pottery can become a sort of communion with the artist.

Working with such a primitive material, but without the support of folk traditions and living in a complex world, the American potter too often feels separated from real life. Two obvious possibilities are offered to him: he can escape into the precious, and for him abnormal, calm of the Chinese potter, without realizing that the attempts of the Tang or Sung craftsman were for their time bold innovations, or he can try to relate the skill and sensibility he has acquired to the requirements and limitations of machine processes. But still another possibility exists. The American potter may add to the interpretation of the contemporary world evolving new forms which, by their validity, will take their place along with those contributions of the other plastic arts that will be considered significant.

*Edwin and Mary Scheier
Written with Paul Grigaut*

EDWIN AND MARY SCHEIER





photos: Edwin and Mary Scheier

EDWIN AND MARY SCHEIER



U. N. Photo Service, Durham, N. H.



photos: Edwin and Mary Scheler



BERNARD LEACH

Bernard Leach is one of the leading contemporary authorities on hand crafted pottery. He was born in China, educated in London, and trained in Japan, where he studied and produced pottery under the instruction of Kenzan the Sixth, an old pottery master. When Kenzan the Sixth died, Mr. Leach fell heir to the title of Kenzan the Seventh. On his return to England he established his own pottery at St. Ives in Cornwall, England.

In October, 1952, Mr. Leach, Mr. Shoji Hamada and Doctor Suetsu Yanagi, three internationally famous leaders in the ceramic field, came to America. They travelled from coast to coast holding seminars, giving lectures and demonstrations. Following are short excerpts, philosophical and observant, from Mr. Leach's summary of their four months' journey.

Looking back over these last months no impression stands out more clearly than the unprecedented readiness of our audiences to listen with open ears to what

that quiet inner voice of the East has to say to the West. Yanagi observes that ordinary Western man has almost lost the capacity of making things beautifully. Most pots made before the industrial revolution had a character and quality of craftsmanship and instinctive design for which it is rare to find an equivalent even in the best work of artist-craftsmen. Most of our art is riddled with egotism, it suffers from exhibitionism and only rarely achieves naked truth, and then usually through purgatorial fires such as Van Gogh endured, or through the loneliness and dogged persistence of such men as Cézanne or Lautrec. Hamada's and Yanagi's call to the artist-craftsman is to come out of isolation.

It seems to me as I get older that this hugging to one's self of private truth destroys its validity. Not being subject to the wear and tear of winds of criticism blowing from planes of ordinary life, the unfettered imagination of the artist, or even craftsman, is let loose in a world of phantasmagoria; resulting in a narcis-

The Leach Pottery



sism referred to as "the ivory tower." No doubt this is a liability in any age, but in our own post-industrial society the corrective which existed in all earlier cultures is almost wholly absent. With us ordinary work—the making of things—is, by comparison, devoid of the play of emotion, intuition and imagination. Thus we have become cogs in the machine we have invented. This is most apparent in America where mass-production, speed, size, and the dollar criterion have resulted in the highest ratio of nervous breakdown, ulcers and insanity. The outer values of life have replaced the inner to a hitherto unknown extent. Under the pressure of fear and competition our peculiar instrument, science, has launched us into the Age of Atomic Fission and even after two world wars the existing philosophies have failed to provide man with an adequate and practical reply to brute force. We hang on the edge of the abyss hoping we may escape disaster.

Bernard Leach



Larkin Bros. Ltd.



The Leach Pottery

Five years ago, as young art school graduates, Warren and Alixandra MacKenzie started to teach and to make pots. They had a strong conviction that there was a real need for hand work in our mechanized society. However, they soon realized that their training did not fit them to be producing craftsmen—potters who make inexpensive pots for use. As their basic desire was to get their work off the teak wood stand and into the kitchen they searched for a spot where the attitude and approach to making pots was what they felt to be right. This search led them to England.

We were accepted as apprentices in the hand pottery of Bernard Leach at St. Ives, England. There a group of seven including ourselves produced everyday articles for table and kitchen use in stoneware and porcelain; these were priced within the reach of an average British income. Such production was possible, primarily because Kenneth Quick and Bill Marshall, two local young men working in the pottery, could throw with a sensitivity and freedom which would put the average "Artist Potter" of America to shame. Their fluency was not a result of having taken an art course or two, but was the natural outcome of a five-year producing apprenticeship coupled with their inherent sensitivity to form, and materials, and of living free from the conflict of industrial habits and thinking.

As American "Artist Potters," we provided the team with many days of amusement in the beginning of our apprenticeship. But during our two years in England we too learned to produce in a natural and easy manner, a way of working which now permits us to make from 50 to 200 pots a day. This level of production is generally rejected by American potters who hold to the

attitude that the repetitive throwing necessary to accomplish that amount of work will automatically lead to "dead pots." But our experience has been that in the making of fifty objects of a kind by hand there is an inevitable development and variation from first to last. With the relaxation and ease of making comes a fluidity of expression which permits the pots to come closer to being "born, not made." This phrase of the Japanese potter, Shoji Hamada, in the simplest manner expresses our aim as potters. Most of the pots now in our museums and generally accepted as the masterpieces of the craft were conceived and made in that way—they were a part of the everyday life of the civilization which produced them. They did not come out of the production of one-of-a-kind exhibition pieces.

At this point perhaps it should be made clear that we are not anti-machine, on the contrary we feel that the precision beauty of machine production is needed to complement that of the hand. That mechanical precision is not the complete answer, however, seems apparent. Emphasis on machine production has created an atmosphere in which people tend to expect mechanical perfection in all objects. But they realize that there is something lacking in their surroundings and try to compensate for it by bringing rock, grasses and driftwood into the home. That a handmade product is an expression of organic growth rather than of the mechanical and abstract perfection of machine work is a concept rarely accepted in the West either by the craftsman or the consumer. While they admire the irregularities and accidents in "found objects" they reject a pot with comparable qualities on the ground that it is not perfect.

In attempting to better understand ourselves and other craftsmen working in America today, we found that the

average craftsman has not been taught to work freely and easily with his materials. The definite tendency is toward a mechanistic perfection in the making rather than toward a more natural organic process. This tendency is, we feel, the logical result of having accepted the conclusion that "the handicraft tool and the machine differ in scale but not in kind." This statement was made by Walter Gropius in 1923 and was implemented in the workshop of the New Bauhaus at Weimar.

As far as it goes the Gropius statement is correct. If one takes a hand tool and powers it by machine through a series of machine controlled movements inevitably the product will be a machine product. But let the same tool be used by a craftsman who allows the feel of his materials to control the way in which he cuts or pulls or beats with the tool and the products will bear the stamp of the human hand and mind. Working with the materials rather than on them is a beginning toward an integrated hand expression. Coupled with this must come a utilization of materials which have the same quality as the method of work. The irregular sensitivities of hand work in pottery, or any other craft for that matter, can be smothered or negated by the use of over refined materials developed for machine production. Our goal is to move toward a greater acceptance of the major role which natural materials play in both forming hand pottery and in the final job of firing.

Now that we have returned from England and begun work on the building of our kiln we shall soon make pots for everyday use. That they will give pleasure to the user is something we deeply hope for. To be enjoyed they must be readily available, so the pots will also be inexpensive.

Warren and Alixandra MacKenzie





WARREN AND ALIXANDRA MACKENZIE

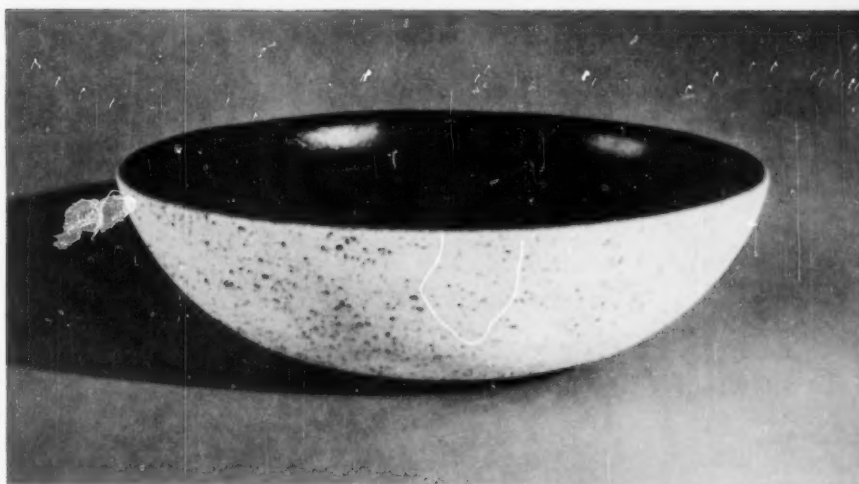


KATHERINE AND BURTON WILSON

Katherine and Burton Wilson are creators of high-fire pottery. Both studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, opening their ceramics studio in 1949, in Austin, Texas. Their goal has been a line of individual ceramics consistently good in design and execution. To achieve their standard of quality they chose to produce a high-fire ware, developing a clay with the body of stoneware but the ring of porcelain. Production methods of casting the pieces in carefully prepared molds insures consistency in the sensitive, subtly sculptured shapes. The glazes they have developed range from polished vellum to the texture of bark, in muted earth tones, carefully selected to enhance rather than dominate the shape.

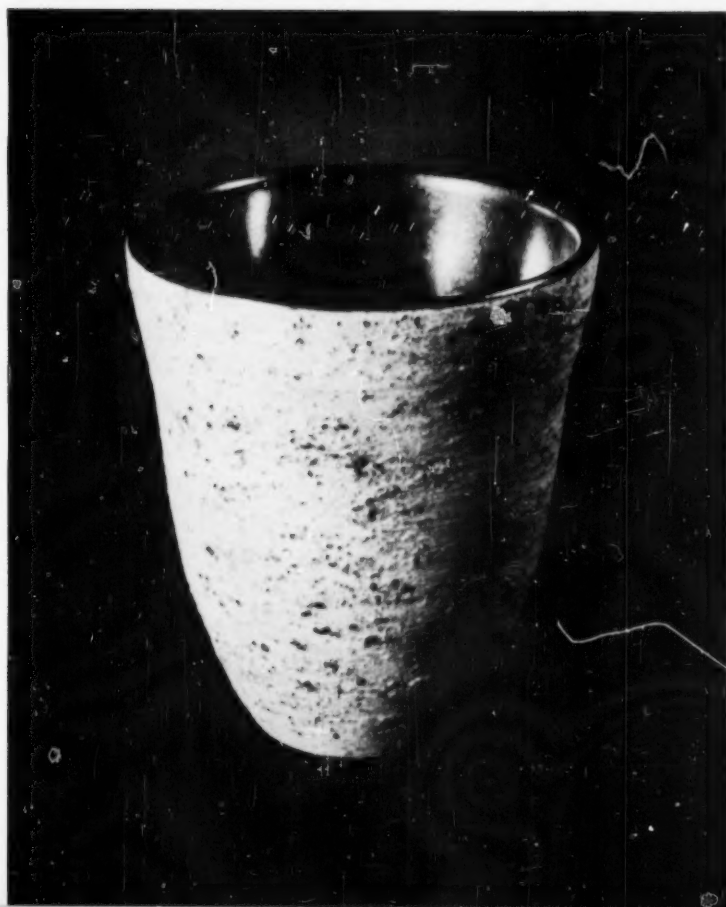
In 1953 they won the first prize in the Texas Crafts Exhibition in Dallas. Recently their stoneware was exhibited at the Akron Art Institute and the Long Beach, California Good Design Exhibit.







KATHERINE AND BURTON WILSON



photos: The Wilson Studio

LEZA S. McVEY

Leza S. McVey was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1907. She is a graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Art, now living in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, with her husband, William M. McVey, who is a well known professor of sculpture at Cranbrook Academy. She has exhibited nationally for a number of years, winning awards in the Syracuse Ceramic National, the Cleveland "May Show," and the Michigan Artists Show. Recent invitational ceramic shows include the Smithsonian, Pomona, California, and selected contemporary exhibits at the Universities of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Nebraska.

Ceramics, to me, is a challenging and highly responsive medium—the one best suited to expressing the forms I have in mind, and the forms I feel the need of as part of my everyday visual and tactile pleasure.

My approach is purely personal—quite frankly I am more than a little weary of the pseudo-Oriental.

No vital period in history has been content to express its needs in the quotation marks of a previous period.

Most pots have been designed as "containers" for flower arrangements, a prescribed number of red apples, or perhaps a decorously shirred egg. These extraneous objects are needed to complete the design. But since flowers will wilt and apples do get eaten, I prefer completing the unit myself. This feeling—undoubtedly a limitation—has led to my incorporating stopper-accent in many of my designs.

I like plastic ever changing silhouettes—the sense of organic growth and inner pressure shaping the exterior. I seldom use the wheel now, as I find asymmetrical designs better keyed to the architectural thinking of our times.

Glazes, to me, should do no more than enhance the basic form and lend visual and tactile appeal. Neither fabric designs, nor rug textures, nor the most proficient hieroglyphics of an Oriental brush master, ap-

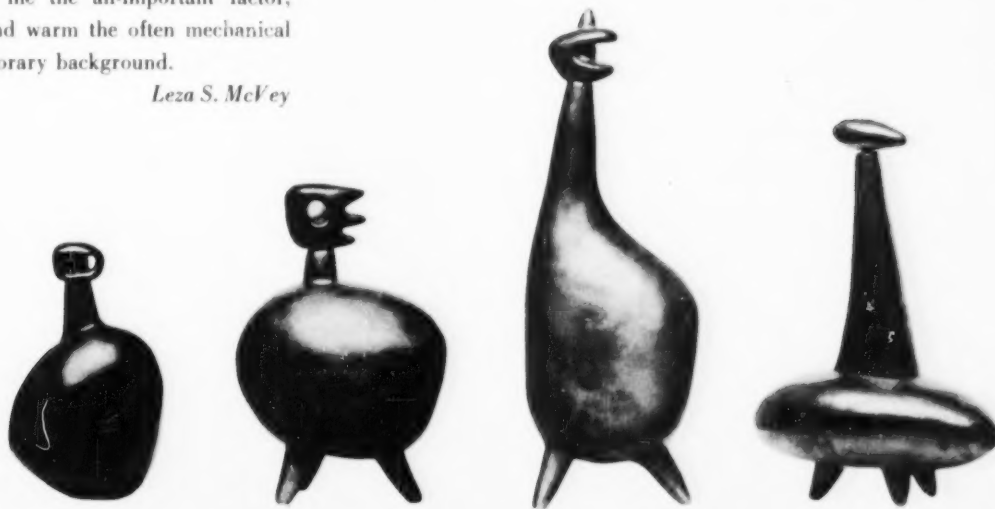
photos, Harvey Craze



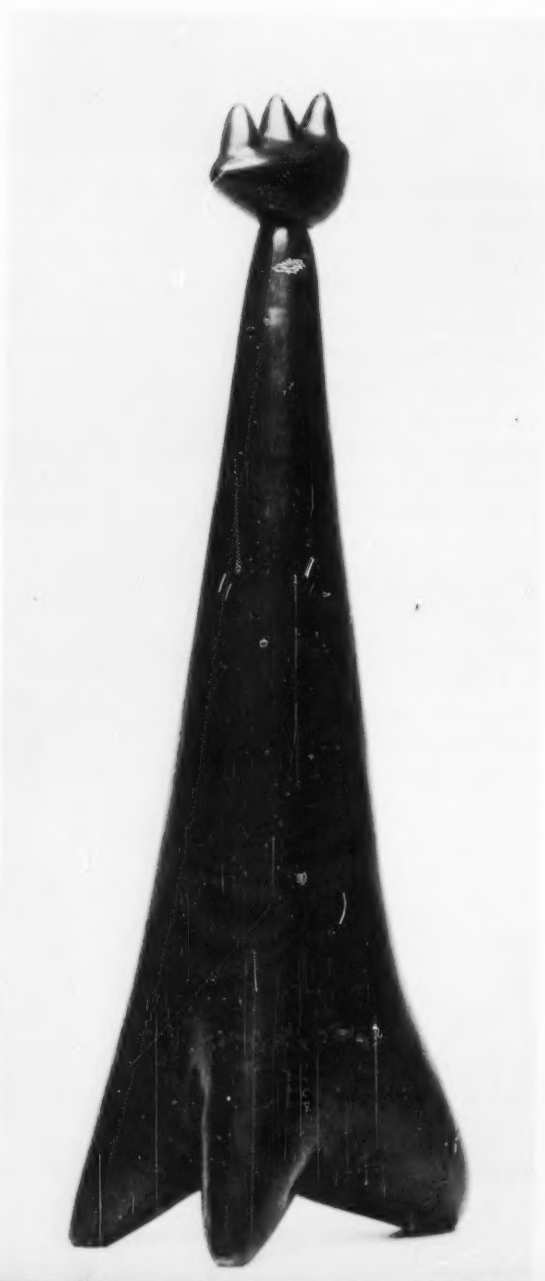
plied to a ceramic surface, will hide a dull shape.

Much has been written about the limitations of the machine. We agree that the mopster must be kept in its rightful place, and its limitations respected. A generation of artists raised in cities, removed from awareness of natural organic forms, is losing touch with the unities of nature. The harmonies of nature's form palette must be as well understood as the more familiar color palette. A city child who has played only with man made blocks and construction sets is at a disadvantage. He has never observed the relationship between the vine and the fruit, or the bush and the flower. He has never gathered eggs warm from the nest, or seen natural erosion, pregnant forms or massive animal forms. The quest of this understanding is to me the all-important factor, needed to balance and warm the often mechanical quality of a contemporary background.

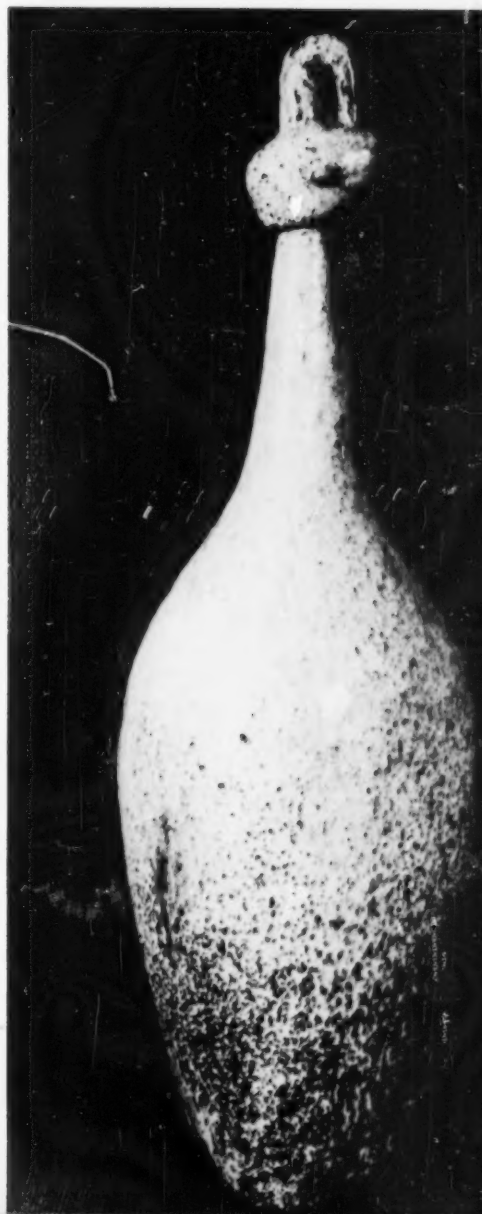
Leza S. McVey



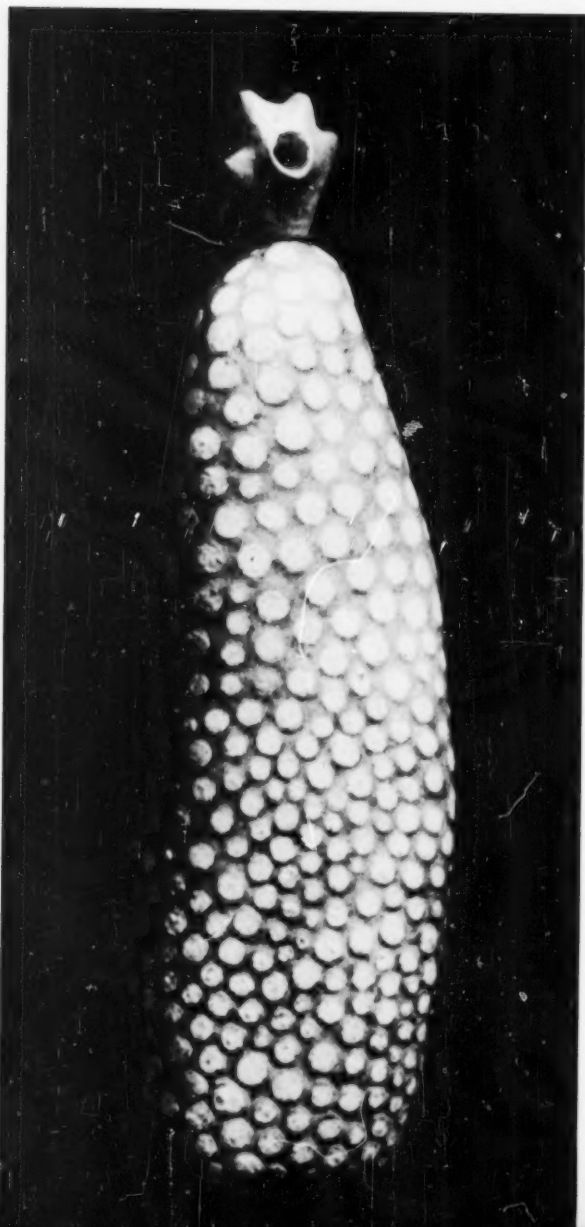
LEZA S. McVEY



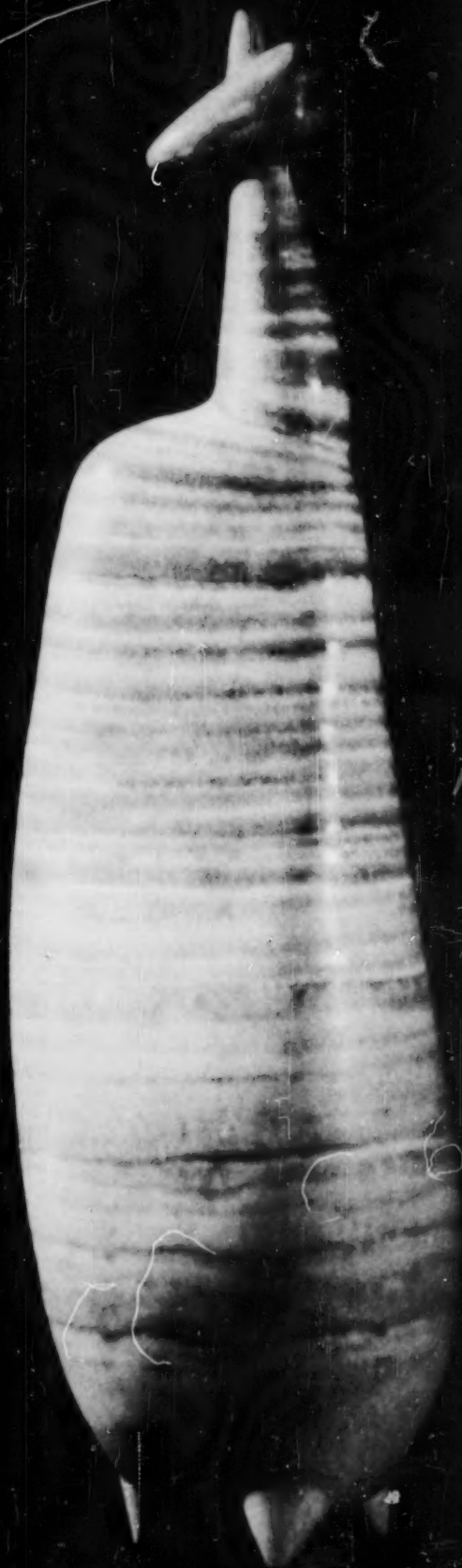
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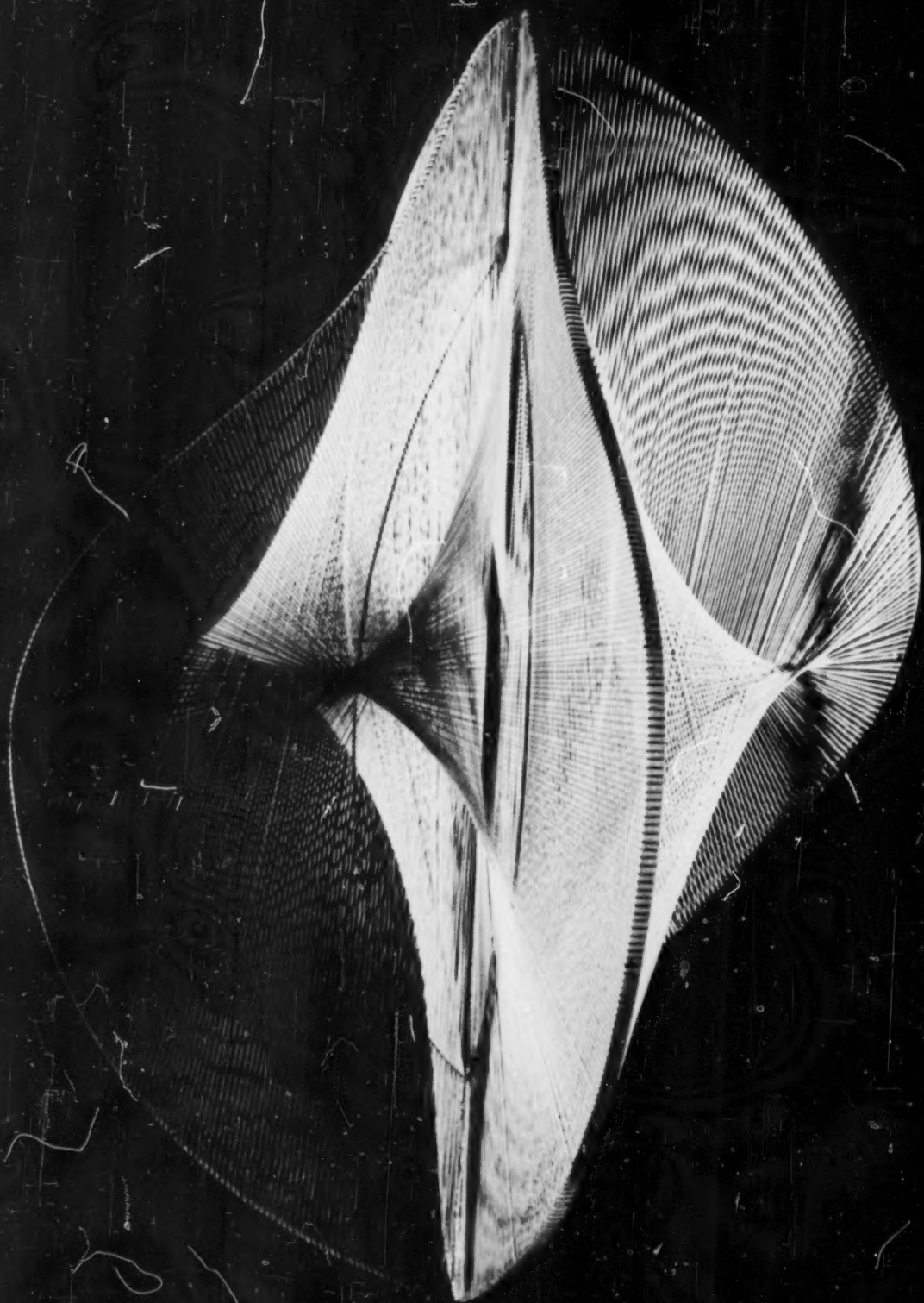


LEZA S. McVEY



photos: Harvey Craze





*A statement by George L. K. Morris on the exhibition,
"The Classic Tradition In Contemporary Art,"
held at the Walker Art Center, April 24th through June 28, 1953*

A NOTE ON THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

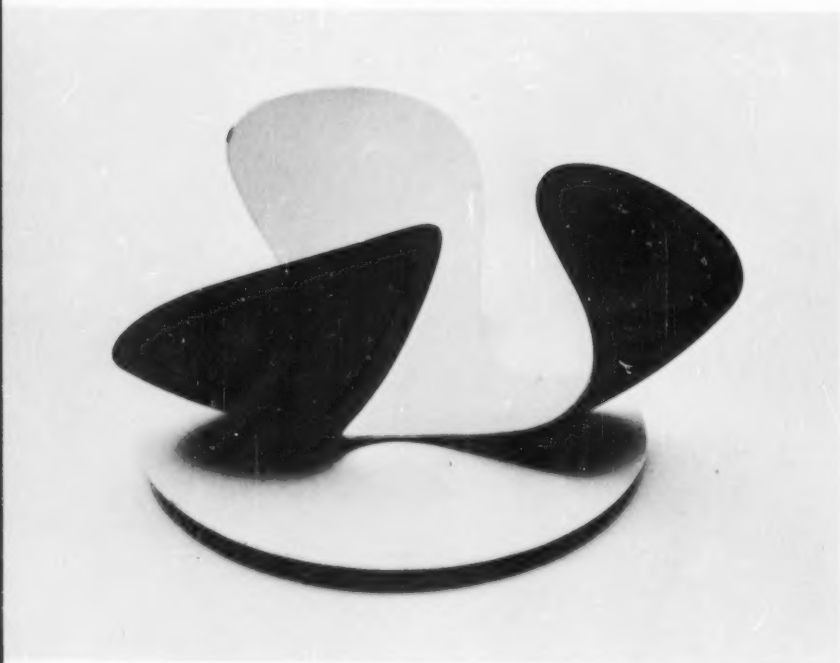
Two opposing impulses would seem to be essential for every art cycle. One of these has been given the name "classical." In classical art we find an emphasis on pictorial structure; every shape seems to rest behind an ordered scheme. Emotional impact may be overwhelming, but it is kept in harmony with the esthetic fabric.

Romantic art provides the antithesis—here we find less emphasis on restraint, sometimes none at all. Often the shapes burst out, as though reaching for something outside the bounds of the picture-rectangle. One might say that a romantic painting typifies an effort to *open*, and this applies equally to works of sculpture, architecture, literature and music. Classical art, on the other hand, suggests a comparable effort to *close*. Realization of the artist's purpose requires both. Too much closing, and a painting may cease to "speak;" too much opening, and taste, as well as the other qualities that make an object a work of art, disappear. After the long "Olympian poise" from Bellini to Titian, for instance, Tintoretto and El Greco provided the essential complement. Conversely, in more modern times, after Van Gogh and Gauguin, it took Seurat and Cézanne to close again, and make our own future possible. In the Twentieth Century the process becomes increasingly accelerated, and a single artist will jump from one concept or approach to its antithesis. Witness

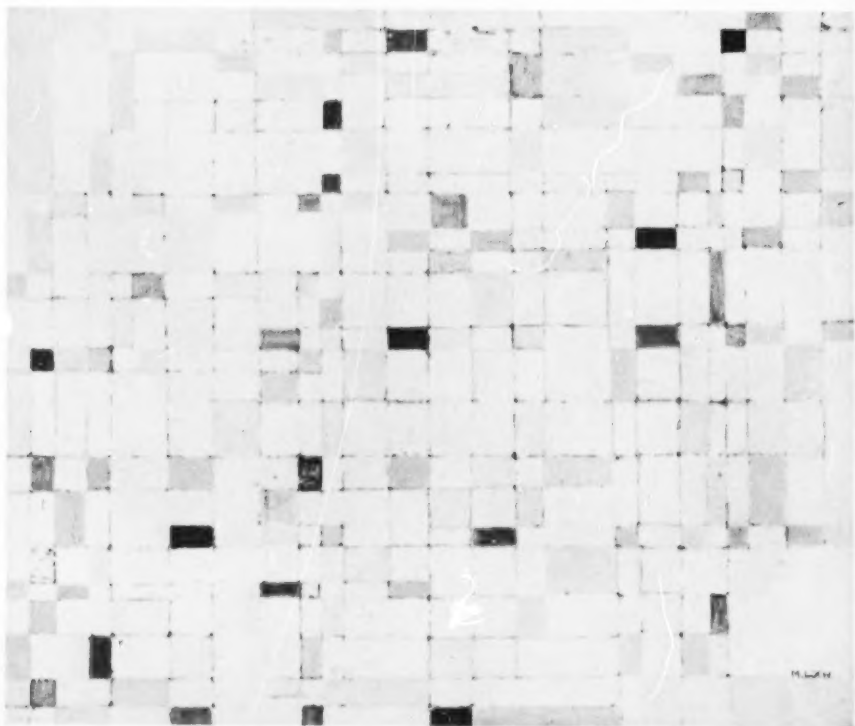
Picasso and Braque—after carrying romanticism as far as it would go in the Fauves days—they moved (1911) into a period of classical conceptions in which their works were completely closed. Often, however, we find a union of opposites within a single painting.

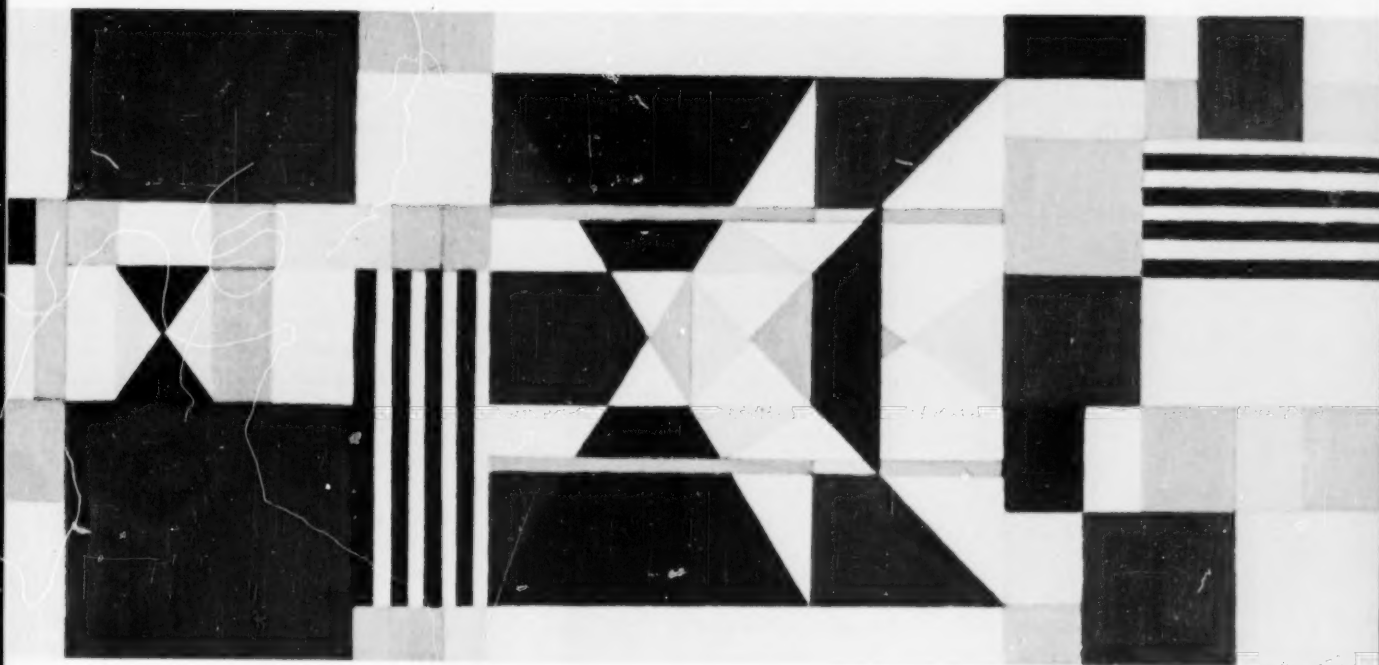
It is particularly pertinent at the present moment that an exhibition of the modern classical approach should have been held in the heart of America. I can recall my first day as a pupil of Léger in Paris many years ago. I had taken some works to his studio—very quickly he commented, "I can see you are a *romantic*." Then, with ill-concealed irony, added, "Quite natural, it's because you are an American." I don't know what Léger can be saying about present developments in America, where a mounting orgy of romanticism has been sweeping in from every side. THE CLASSIC TRADITION IN CONTEMPORARY ART should demonstrate tellingly that there is another story, too. There has always been in America a continuous effort toward restoring balance. Even more profoundly romantic painters, such as Marin, were included in the exhibition to remind us that a romantic work of art is more than just an egotistical explosion. Arp once put it succinctly when he observed that a work of art is—in its essence—a beautiful object, like a vase or a temple.

George L. K. Morris



JOSE DE RIVERA
Construction in Yellow and Black, 1952



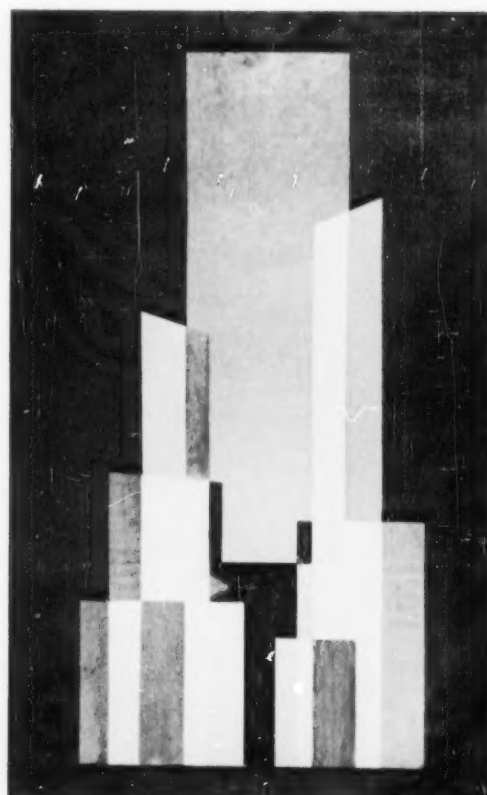


CHARMION VON WIEGAND
The Emerald Tablets, 1951

MICHAEL LOEW
Landscape Volumes, 1951



GEORGES BRAQUE
Still Life, 1912



CHARLES G. SHAW
Plastic Polygon, 1938

BOOK REVIEWS

NEW FURNITURE, Gerd Hatje, editor. 132 pages. Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc. 1952. \$8.50

NEW FURNITURE is the first edition of what the editor and publisher intend to be an international annual survey of the best furniture developed in the several countries. The quality and amount of work illustrated indicate how markedly interest in contemporary design has increased in the course of the past decade. In the late nineteen-twenties and thirties the names of Gilbert Rohde, Donald Deskey, Marcel Breuer, Alvar Aalto, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Bruno Mathsson came to be generally known to people who were interested in furniture design, but when the New York Museum of Modern Art in October of 1940 inaugurated a competition to stimulate the design and manufacture of home furnishings which could be produced by modern methods, use new materials and be harmonious with contemporary architecture, the list of designers named above could have been extended only slightly. Such contemporary furniture as was well known in 1940 was not widely distributed and easily available. Now, Gerd Hatje, in a carefully edited collection of 275 photographs, finds it possible to present work by 107 designers from nine countries. This material is a selection from current production; it admirably covers the main trends in the field but does not pretend to be exhaustive.

The works illustrated would indicate that there are no clearly defined "national" differences in approach to the problems of design but show, on the contrary, how truly international is the effort to design furniture that is physically and visually light, strong, flexible and adapted to multiple use. When one compares Charles Eames' brilliant designs in molded plywood, from the mid-forties, with presumably later ones by Egon Eiermann of Germany it is evident that there is either considerable "borrowing" and adaptation of forms and ideas or a truly remarkable parallelism of thought among designers. It is equally notable how quickly the elegant "floating" construction first seen a few years ago in the work of the Italians and Danes has become internationalized.

The major part of the work illustrated by Hatje could not be contained within the limits of the purely "functional" as we used that word a few years ago. The designers attempt—successfully—to go beyond the expression of material and process. Some pieces, as those by Finn Juhl of Denmark, represent the triumph of fine craftsmanship in terms of modern esthetic rather than concern with methods of industrial fabrication. A few of the designs seem arbitrary and forced but there is very little merely fashionable chi-chi in this collection and nothing that is so determinedly avant-garde as to be useless.

In the opinion of the reviewer the outstanding excellencies among this superior group of designs are to be found among the pieces by Franco Albini (Italy), Hans Bellmann (Switzer-

land), Robin Day (Great Britain), Bruno Mathsson, Karen and Nisse Strinning (Sweden), William Armbruster, Charles Eames, Eero Saarinen and Edward Wormley (U.S.A.). An annual of this quality would be most welcome but it is doubtful if there is enough new material each year for so extensive a collection as is reproduced in this issue, which contains a piece (as the Mies Barcelona chair) designed some twenty years ago.

The material surveyed covers the following categories: Chairs and Sofas, Tables, Cupboards and Shelves, Beds and Couches, Nurseries, Kitchens, Furniture for Outdoor Living. The introduction and captions are in English, German and French, and an index of designers and manufacturers, with their addresses, is provided. The volume would be even more interesting and useful, now as well as in the future, if the captions indicated the year when each design was first introduced and its approximate current price.

Donald R. Torbert

IDEA 53. INTERNATIONAL DESIGN ANNUAL, Gerd Hatje, editor. 129 pages. Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc. Publishers. 1952. \$8.50

This is a companion volume to NEW FURNITURE, reviewed above, that surveys products in the field of industrial design—dealing, specifically, with china and pottery, plastics, glass, wood, textiles, metal, household appliances, communication devices, lamps and clocks. Like NEW FURNITURE IDEA 53 is international in scope. Through the medium of 373 excellent photographs it presents products by 127 designers from 175 manufactories. Collaborating with editor Hatje in assembling the material were Max Bill (Switzerland), Arthur Hald (Sweden), Heinz Löffelhardt (Germany), Paul Reilly (Great Britain), Alberto Rosselli (Italy), Sven Skawonius (Sweden) and Herwin Schaefer (U.S.A.). The volume contains brief essays on the state of industrial design in their respective areas by Bill, Reilly, Rosselli and Schaefer. The outstanding sections—both qualitatively and quantitatively—are those dealing with china, plastics, glass and metal, where the level of design quality is indeed high. The sections dealing with appliances, communication, lamps and clocks are less adequate. In some of these fields it must be admitted there are fewer good products and less variety among designs but the United States produces more and better household appliances than this collection would suggest and both Sweden and the United States produce better lamps and textiles.

Altogether it is a good and useful book—which is again made better through the editor's having included an index with addresses of both designers and manufacturers.

Donald R. Torbert

EVERYDAY ART QUARTERLY

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decorators

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